

**Mr.Chairman and members of the committee,**

**My name is Daniel Huften and currently reside in Torrington. I am here to support bill# 5871, "an act concerning workers' compensation coverage for emergency service personnel."**

I joined the fire service in 1992, at the age of 20, as a volunteer firefighter for the City of Torrington. In 1995 I was hired by the City of Waterbury as a firefighter and retired in 2013 holding the rank of Fire Lieutenant.

During my 21+ years as a firefighter I was blessed to be able to be part of such a rewarding profession. A true vocation. I experienced a brotherhood akin to that of nuclear family along with the deep inner rewards of protecting life and property. The list of positives is endless. Then there are the consequences. The physical injuries and ensuing surgeries, not to mention the psychological and emotional tolls of witnessing the darkest of the dark. All part of the job that we sign up for and without regret.

Living with a firefighter is a whole different story. My wife and two children were simply along for the ride. From my daughter in her toddler years grasping onto my leg, begging me not to go to work, to my wife hoping not to receive that dreaded knock on the door from department clergy. They have seen me leave on many occasion to attend another firefighter's funeral. In retrospect I truly believe that my occupation was more stressful on my family than it was on me.

In February of 2012 I sustained another injury to my back. Several years earlier, while fighting a fire in a well involved structure, the third floor stairwell collapsed while i was just beginning my descent. However, this time my prognosis was uncertain. It was during this time I experienced the "system" faults and all. After dozens of physical therapy treatments, several epidural injections, two major surgeries combined with the continuous hoop jumping of the system, the process which at times was agonizingly slow abruptly came to an end, along with my beloved career.

Eight months following my retirement and not quite fully recovered from my last surgery, I received more devastating news. I was diagnosed with stage 3 colorectal cancer and was to begin treatments immediately. These treatments would include 6 weeks of chemotherapy and radiation treatments followed by surgery that would leave me with a permanent colostomy. Following surgery I was to begin four additional months of chemotherapy, which I recently began on January 17th. I had also realized that my 30 year term life insurance policy would be nearing its end date. I would be uninsurable for the next five years, assuming that I remain in remission, with expected high premiums to follow. Who was going to take care of my family? A question that still looms.

It occurred to me that I was the 8th firefighter from our department, that I know of, that has battled cancer. This includes Brother firefighter Jeff Trota who lost his hard fought battle with colorectal cancer in 2005 at the age of 44. My oncologist classified these cases as a "cluster". As I delved deeper into research I became horrified by my findings. I learned there were departments with their own firefighter cancer foundations, that cancer was an epidemic in the fire service accounting for the majority of firefighter deaths. Then there was the legal aspect or lack there of. I discovered wide discrepancies regarding cancer legislation from state to state, and if there was legislation in place was it truly accessible and able to be utilized. The aforementioned hoops and red tape of the system certainly would have no place in cancer care. Time is of the essence, with early detection likely being the difference between life or death.

As we expose this white cancer elephant in the fire service I realize that some will unveil their own analogy, most likely an anemic piggy bank. If we do have a price tag assigned to our life, please consider this. To date my previous self insured employer has been billed over \$245,000, with agreed upon payments totaling \$80,000, with additional associated costs for the remainder of my life. If I was offered a \$1,800 colonoscopy 3 years ago, both myself and Mr. Piggy bank would be much happier.

In conclusion, we truly did not know exactly what we were signing up for. In all fairness no one did, but thanks to the advancements in medicine, we now do. Subsequently, you have been presented with overwhelming evidence supporting the fact that cancer is an epidemic in the fire service. I humbly ask you to support Bill #5871, believing its comprehensive nature will not only lesson long term cancer related costs, but more importantly it can save our lives. Thank you and may GOD Bless.

*Daniel Huften*